

# TAMARACK CHIMNEY FIRE SALVAGE PROJECT

## PALS# 60727

### PROPOSAL

Background The North Complex Fire began with a series of lightning strikes August 17, 2020. The Claremont Fire and Bear Fire located on the Plumas National Forest merged and on September 8, 2020 spotted across the Middle Fork Feather River, entered Butte County, and traveled some 30 miles that day. The North Complex Fire burned areas along the 22N94 and 22N27 roads in the Tamarack Flat area.

Tree mortality has occurred in areas of mixed and high fire severity. These fire-killed trees represent a roadside safety hazard and risk to forest visitors, will become dangerous fuels, and must be removed. In some stands, mortality approaches 100% and artificial reforestation efforts will be needed to bring them into compliance with forest plan objectives and NFMA reforestation requirements.

Stands are made up of mixed conifer species: ponderosa pine, white fir, incense cedar, sugar pine, Douglas fir, tan-oak, and black oak. The project includes the salvage of fire killed trees with an approximate volume of 6,000 MBF.

Proposed Project Location Tamarack Flat is located off 22N94 road, northwest of the Little Grass Valley Reservoir, within the Plumas National Forest in Plumas County. See attached map.

Proposed Project Action and Description This project proposes to treat no more than 250 acres using conventional or mechanical tractor logging practices. To accomplish restoration, FRRD proposes to salvage cut, hand-cut-and-pile brush, burn brush piles, plant trees in the ground, masticate brush, prune resprouting oaks, dig fire-lines by hand, and hand-spray herbicides.

- Salvage Cut removing trees which are dead or dying because of injurious agents other than competition, to recover economic value that would otherwise be lost. Salvage will be conducted following designation by damage class. Follow marking guidelines for fire-injured trees in California (Smith and Cluck 2011). No sawlog diameter limits for salvage cut;
- Mastication any crushing, mowing, mulching, or other treatment that grinds or shreds vegetation (e.g. brush, fire killed trees) leaving resulting material on the forest floor;
- Herbicide treatments site preparation and release treatments by application of herbicides to control competing vegetation (target species would be primarily the shrub species ceanothus, manzanita, deer brush, Himalayan blackberry and other species as necessary). Herbicides would be limited to glyphosate and triclopyr using a targeted backpack sprayer and cut-and-daub methods to enhance the success of natural regeneration or regeneration on sites that will be replanted, in accordance with stream buffer and operating period restrictions in the management requirements table;
- Hand-Cut felling of trees and shrubs using chainsaws;
- Yarding removal of activity-generated slash and other fuels from the site by carrying or dragging;

- Piling of Fuels, Hand or Machine pile all activity generated slash and cover with waterproof covering for burning during winter months;
- Burning of Piled Material burning of piled material including hand and machine piles during winter months to remove hazardous fuels;
- Plant Trees the establishment or re-establishment of forest cover artificially by planting seedlings and/or cuttings, with or without site preparation;
- Prune the removal, close to the branch collar or flush with stem, of side branches and multiple leaders from oak (or other hardwood) resprouts;
- Tree Release and Weed treatment (mechanical or herbicide) designed to free young trees from undesirable, competing vegetation in stands not past sapling stage;
- Precommercial Thin the selective felling, deadening, or removal of trees from a young stand to maintain a specific stocking or stand density range;
- Dig Fire Lines by Hand hand-installation of a control line that is scraped or dug to mineral soil;
- Prescribed fire; activity where fire is applied to the majority or all of an area within well-defined boundaries for reduction of fuel hazard, as a resource management treatment, or both to achieve desired conditions;
- Maintenance hand cutting, hand- and/or grapple-piling, mastication, biomassing, targeted grazing, herbicide applications, and prescribed under-burning as needed on multiple entries over the next 30 to 40 years to maintain desired conditions.
- The project will include road improvements and maintenance to existing roads.

Purpose of Action The Chief of the Forest Service and the Regional Forester have stressed that the safety of the public and our employees is our central concern. In developed recreation areas and within the transportation corridors, hazard tree management is vital to everyone's safety

In areas where fire regimes and forest structure have been dramatically altered, there is increasing concern that contemporary fires have the potential to set forests on a positive feedback trajectory with successive reburns, one in which extensive stand replacing fire could promote more stand-replacing fire. Coppoletta et al. (2016) results suggest that high- to moderate severity fire in initial fires led to an increase in standing snags and shrub vegetation, which in combination with severe fire weather promoted high-severity fire effects in subsequent reburn. Although fire behavior is largely driven by weather, post-fire vegetation composition and structure are also important drivers of reburn severity. In the face of changing climatic regimes and increases in extreme fire weather, managers require options to create more fire-resilient ecosystems.

Need for Action The January, 2004, Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment provides for ecosystem restoration following catastrophic disturbance events through the salvage harvest of dead and dying trees conducted to recover the economic value of this material and to support objectives for reducing hazardous fuels, improving forest health, reintroducing fire, and/or reestablishing forested conditions.

Providing socioeconomic benefits, including the provision of a sustainable supply of timber, is part of the mandate of the USDA Forest Service. Providing adequate timber supplies contributes to the economic stability of rural communities in Sierra Nevada forests.

Additional Information The proposed action is initially thought to fall within the Categorical Exclusion (CE) authorized and described in 36 CFR 220.6(e)(13): salvage of dead and/or dying trees not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than ½ mile of temporary road construction.

The project is anticipated to have a decision in Winter, 2021 and implementation can begin as early as Spring, 2022. Please provide comments to Clay Davis, [clay.davis@usda.gov](mailto:clay.davis@usda.gov); Ryan Davy, [ryan.davy@usda.gov](mailto:ryan.davy@usda.gov); or Eric J. Murphy, [eric.j.murphy@usda.gov](mailto:eric.j.murphy@usda.gov)